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ON THE  
DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT,  
OR  
REMISSION.

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*Bible - Appendix - Miscellaneous*  
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THE

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE

2

OF

REMISSION.

WHICH SHEWETH

That the Death of CHRIST is no  
proper Sacrifice nor Satisfaction for Sin:  
but that pardon is dispensed solely on ac-  
count of repentance, or a personal refor-  
mation of the Sinner.

*By J. Priestley.*

*See Theol. Rep.  
Vol. 1 p 267.*

—And that repentance and remission of sins  
should be preached to all Nations— JESUS.

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M D C C L X I.

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MDCCLXX.



## INTRODUCTION.

**B**Y reason of the poverty of all languages, the use of figurative expressions, or the affixing of the same term to things that are only analogous to one another, cannot be avoided; especially, in treating of moral or religious subjects, in which our ideas themselves must, necessarily, be much compounded, and borrowed from sensible things.



WHAT hath still more contributed to fill all languages with these artificial forms of speech, is, that when necessity had first introduced such an use of words, the ingenuity of men, as in other similar cases, presently worked it up into a beauty. Some allusions were observed to be so peculiarly happy and striking, as to incite men of taste and invention to seek for more: hence a language extremely scanty in its elements, comes to abound in words; most of which, however, are artificial or compounded, and may, with care, be reduced to their simple component parts.

BUT

BUT such is the nature both of our ideas and words, and such the power of association, that what was at first evidently compounded or figurative, by frequent use ceases to be conceived to be so: compound ideas and expressions in time pass for simple ones, till, after a vigorous scrutiny, their derivation be seen, and they appear to be factitious. In like manner, it is very possible to call one thing by the name of another by way of allusion only, till at last, the allusion be forgotten, and the nature of the thing itself be mistaken.

THOUGH therefore, the derivation of words from so fruitful a source,

does very much enrich a language, though the use of figures in speech, or writing, very much enliven a discourse, give a colour and strength to the expression; and, if the allusions be made with judgment, may, in many cases, facilitate the discovery of truth; yet the too free an use of them may embarrass the sense, and render the speaker or writer's meaning very dubious or obscure, especially to those who are not used to his manner.

THIS is universally complained of when the writings of the *Asiatics* in general fall into the hands of *Europeans*; they go so far beyond

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us in the boldness and freedom of their figures. And this is one cloud that hangs over the true meaning of the writers of the books of scripture; which, at this distance of time and difference of manners, it is exceeding difficult for us to see through; and hath led their readers into very widely different apprehensions of their sense; some resting in the most obvious and gross meaning of the words they use; while others, suspecting this to be falling short of their true meaning, wander many different ways in quest of it.

PERHAPS concerning no one thing of which the sacred writers do treat,  
have

have the notions of moderns been more widely different of their meaning, than concerning the account they give us of the death of Christ, the view they supposed he suffered with, and the end, which they assert, was in fact answered by it. The most distinguished opinions that are maintained among christians at this day, seem to be the following.

*First*, SOME maintain that Christ, in his agony and death, endured pains equal in degree (the dignity of his person considered) to those that sinful men ought to have suffered on account of their sins, by a kind of substitution of persons, and transferring

ferring of guilt ; agreeable to which, they hold, that this was the proper notion of a sacrifice for sin under the law : all which, they say, were *types* or *emblems* of the great sacrifice of Christ. But of those who agree with them that the pardon of sin is dispensed in consideration of the sufferings of Christ, all do not insist that the divine Being could not, consistently with the honour of his perfections, have accepted of less than a full equivalent for satisfaction ; some supposing the divine Being to have been at liberty to accept of any finite satisfaction that he pleased.

*Secondly,*



*Secondly,* Others, again, agree with the former, that the death of Christ is a proper sacrifice for sin, like the Jewish sacrifices; but then they suppose that the virtue of a sacrifice consisted, not in the shedding of the blood, or the death of the victim, but in the disposition of the offerer, of which the sacrificing of the beast was in some manner emblematical; and that in like manner the virtue of the death of Christ consisted, not in the pain that he endured, but in his real virtue and worth, manifested to God and the world by his obedience unto death. Though, therefore, they deny the necessity of any vicarious sufferings, they

they assert the necessity of the interposition and mediation of some person of distinguished virtue and worth, on the part of the offender, before the divine Being could, in wisdom, dispense pardon to them.

*Lastly*, Others, in direct opposition to both the fore-mentioned opinions, maintain, that the death of Christ had no manner of relation to a proper sacrifice for sin; and that the Apostles never meant more than a figurative allusion to those Jewish rites: that Christ died in consequence of his undertaking to reform a vicious world, for the proof of his di-

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vine mission and doctrine, and other such rational, simple, and consistent ends. They maintain that there was no necessity for satisfaction of any kind, or the interposition of any being whatever, in order to God's remitting the sins of men.

**NON**





ON THE  
DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT,  
OR  
REMISSION.

PON a most careful examination of the texts produced for the *commonly received* doctrine of atonement, it must be granted, that some do seem to represent the pardon of sin as dispensed in consideration of something else than our repentance or personal virtue; and according to their literal sense, the pardon of sin, is, in some way or other, procured by Christ. And indeed, had their

their literal representation been all of a piece; had the sacred writers uniformly represented God the Father as dispensing the pardon of sin to penitent offenders, in consideration either of the sufferings, or of the merit of Christ, our only intercessor; the account would have had more of the air and consistency, at least, of truth: it would have appeared more plausible for a time; though, for the reasons that follow, we should, still, have found ourselves, at least, obliged to reject the representation. But when the pardon of sin is sometimes represented as dispensed in consideration of the *sufferings*, sometimes of the *merit*, sometimes of the *resurrection*, and even of the *life*, and *obedience* of Christ: that it is sometimes Christ, and sometimes the Spirit that interceeds for us; that the dispensing of pardon is sometimes said to be the proper act of God the Father; and, again, that it is Christ who forgives us; when, I say, all these seeming inconsistencies stare us in the

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the face, we can hardly hesitate in concluding, that these must be, severally, partial representations in the nature of figures and allusions, which, at proper distances, are allowed to be inconsistent, without any charge of impropriety in the style of the composition.

Do not reason, then, and common sense bid us appeal from so vague a representation of a matter of fact, founded on texts, which carry with them so much the air of figure, allusion, and accommodation, to the plain general tenor of scripture; which, in almost every chapter, represents the pardon of sin as dispensed solely on account of mens personal virtue, a penitent upright heart and a reformed exemplary life, without the least regard to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever. The following texts are instances of what is here advanced.

B

Gen:



Gen. iv. 7. *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted.* Psal. xv. throughout. *Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart, &c. &c.* Psalm li. 17. *The sacrifices of the Lord are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.* Isai. iii. 10. *Say ye to the righteous, It shall be well with him; for they shall eat of the fruit of their doings: But wo unto the wicked; It shall be ill with them for the works of their hands shall be given them.* Isaiah lv. 7. *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon.*

Mat. v. 1—12. Our Saviour's beatitudes.

—vi. 14. *If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*



you. John xii. 16. *If any man serve me, him will my father honour.* Acts x. 34. *Then Peter said, of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but, in every nation, he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness is accepted of him.* —ii. 37. *And they were pricked to the heart, and said, men and brethren, what shall we do. And Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized, for the remission of sins.* —iii. 19. *Repent ye, therefore, and be converted that your sins may be blotted out.* —xvii. 31. *But now commandeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, &c. &c.* Rom. xiv. 17, 18. *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable unto God, and approved of men.* 1 Cor. xv. 58. *Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord*

knowing that your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. 2 Cor. i. 12. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. 1 Tim. iv. 8. Godliness is profitable to all things; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. James ii. 24. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. Rev. ii. 10. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. Rev. xiv. 13. Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; yea, saith the spirit, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them. —xxii. 14. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life.

Our expectation of pardon and salvation solely upon the account of our own moral character and good works, is further confirmed by the following absolute declarations  
of

of the divine mercy and favour to the penitent and virtuous, in which, there is not the most distant hint of any regard had to the sufferings or merit of any other being whatever.

Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin.* 2 Chron. xxx. 9. *For if ye turn again to the Lord, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that led them captive. For the Lord your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn his face from you, if ye turn unto him.* Psal. xxv. 8. *Good and upright is the Lord; therefore will he teach sinners in the way.* — lxxxvi. 5. *Thou Lord art good, and ready to forgive.* — ciii. 8, &c. *The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy: he will not*



*always chide, neither will he keep his anger  
 for ever. He hath not dealt with us after  
 our sins, nor rewarded us after our iniquities.  
 As far as the east is from the west, so far  
 hath he removed our transgressions from us.  
 Isa. xxx. 18. He waiteth that he may be  
 gracious. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. As I live,  
 saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the  
 death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn  
 from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye,  
 why will ye die, oh house of Israel. —  
 14, &c. When I say to the wicked, thou  
 shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and  
 do that which is lawful and right; if the  
 wicked restore the pledge, give again that  
 which he robbed, walk in the statutes of life,  
 without committing iniquity, he shall surely  
 live, he shall not die. None of the sins that  
 he hath committed shall be mentioned to him.  
 He hath done that which is lawful and right,  
 he shall surely live thereby. Dan. ix. 3.  
 To the Lord our God, belong mercies and  
 forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against  
 him.*

him. Micah vii. 18. *Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression.*—Jonah iv. 2. *For I know that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.* John xvi. 26. *At that day ye shall ask in my name, and I say not unto you that I will pray the father for you; for the father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.* 2 Pet. iii. 9. *The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.* 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* To these add, Rom. iii. 24. *Being justified freely by his grace.* Titus iii. 7. *Being justified by his grace,*—for do but admit that the favour is procured for us by the suffering of another, and you take away from the freeness of the grace.

WE have a fine view of the absolute offer of free mercy in God presented to us, in that text of scripture, in which Christ is called a *mercy-seat*; implying, that by him, as from the mercy-seat of old, God makes the gracious declarations of pardon and favour to penitent sinners. Rom. iii. 35. *Whom God hath set forth to be [ἱλαστήριον] a MERCY-SEAT by faith in his blood.*

WHEN doth David or any other devout good man mentioned in the scriptures plead any thing, in his penitential addresses to the divine Being, but his own integrity, or the free mercy of the divine nature? The following passages are a specimen of all the rest.

PSAL. vi. 4. *Return ob Lord, deliver my soul, and save me for thy mercies sake.* —

xxv. 6. *Remember, ob Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old. Remember not the*  
 *sins*



*sins of my youth, nor my transgressions; according to thy mercy remember thou me, for thy goodness sake oh Lord. — li. 1. Have mercy upon me, oh God! according to thy loving kindness, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. — vii. 8. Judge me, oh Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me. Isa. xxxviii. 3. Hezekiah pleading for longer life says: Remember now, oh Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is right in thy sight.*

WHAT stress the worthy Nehemiah lays upon his good works before God, the following passages will show.

NEHEM. v. 19. *Think upon me, my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this people. — xiii. 14. Remember me, oh my God, concerning this; and wipe not*

*not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.*

— 22. *Remember me, oh my God, concerning this also, and spare me, according to the greatness of thy mercy.*

WHAT can be more evident from these texts, and indeed from the whole tenor of the old testament, than that these ancient worthies in religion had no notion of atonement for sin, by any other sufferings or merit than their own. Their language upon all occasions, even when they address themselves to the Deity, shows, that they expected pardon and favour solely on account of their integrity, either maintained through life, or else recovered by sincere repentance.

THAT the belief of the doctrine of atonement is not *necessary to salvation*, must be allowed to be justly inferred from facts, which prove, that many unquestionably good

good men were ignorant of it. But do they not prove more? If sin really required any proper expiation, and no repentance or good works of men could secure the Divine favour and acceptance; is it at all probable? can we reconcile it with the goodness and other perfections of the Divine Being, that he should suffer so many good men, the teachers and ornaments of a divine religion, at a time when extraordinary interpositions were so very frequent, to live and die under so gross a mistake; to place all their most important hopes upon a false confidence, a refuge of lies; to trust to a broken reed; to cover themselves with filthy rages? &c. &c. &c.

○ If the opinion of the merit of good works had been so exceedingly pernicious, of such baleful influence as it is represented to be by some; if it really swelled men's hearts with unbecoming, unreasonable, and abominable pride, by usurping to man's-  
self



self any part of the praise and glory which is due to God alone; is it probable that the Divine Being would have suffered such impious language to pass without a severe animadversion? Ought not *Job*, *David*, *Hezekiah*, *Nehemiah* and *Daniel*, to have been severely reprov'd, when they presumed to mention their integrity before God: and to take refuge in his natural perfections alone, without interposing the sufferings or merit of any other to mediate for them? Ought there not to have been some very strong clause annexed to those absolute and unlimited declarations of divine mercy, which should have fixed and restrained their meaning beyond all possibility of dispute; in order to prevent gross and dangerous mistakes, and constructions, which are so easily put upon them? Did not the Divine Being know the inbred pride of the human heart? How prone and glad we were to take advantage of every handle to in-

dodge

dulge a disposition which was so natural and hurtful to us.

AND if *Moses, David*, and the rest of the Jewish worthies, had any notion of the necessity of the sufferings of any person to atone for sin, is it not strange that not so much as a single expression, implying such a sentiment, should be found in all their writings?

INDEED, admitting the popular doctrine of atonement, the whole Old Testament is, throughout, a most unaccountable book: unanswerable queries start of themselves every where. The worship described in it is not only imperfect, but defective in the most fundamental, essential, and the plainest articles of all religion. The Divine Being himself gives a very partial and false account of his own nature and attributes; and the most devout and favoured of his worshippers derogate from the honour of  
God

God whenever they speak of him; nay, even blaspheme him to his face. Surely the respect we owe to these books, to the religion they contain, to the men, and especially to the God that we, in common with them, worship, bids us reject, with indignation, an opinion that presents them in so disadvantageous a light.

WHEN, in the Old Testament, the legal sacrifices are declared by the prophets, to be insufficient to procure the favour of God; it is observable, that there is never any other more perfect sacrifice mentioned in opposition to them; as we might reasonably expect, if they really had referred to any such more perfect sacrifice, and such an one had been necessary. On the contrary, personal holiness only is all that is ever opposed to them, as of more value with God. The following texts are instances of this.

PSAL.



PSAL. li. 16, 17. For thou desirest not sacrifice, else would I give it, thou delightest not in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of the Lord are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, oh God, thou wilt not despise. Isa. i. 11—20. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord, I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. Bring no more vain oblations. Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, and plead for the widows: Come, now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land. Hos. vi. 6. For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offering. Amos. v. 22—27. Though ye offer me burnt offerings, will I accept them? But let judgment run down as water,

*water, and righteousness as a mighty stream. Micah vi. 6, 7. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, and calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee oh man what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God.*

THE wisest of the Jews in our Saviour's time talk exactly in the same strain, and in the presence of our Lord himself, who is so far from disapproving it, or attempting to set them right in the matter, that he gives his own sanction to the sentiment.

Mark xii. 33, &c. *And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding and with all the soul, and with all*

*all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is better than all whole burnt-offering and sacrifice. And when Jesus saw that he answered discreetly, he said unto him, Thou art not far from the kingdom of God.*

INDEED, from the whole history of the *Gospels* and the *Acts*, nothing can be plainer than, not only that the bulk of the nation, but that the most intelligent Jews, in our Saviour's and the Apostle's times, had not the least notion of the necessity of the sufferings or mediation of any Being to atone for sin. Their sacrifices, they knew, would avail them nothing, and they had no knowledge, or apprehension, of any other. For that they were the farthest in the world from expecting a suffering *Messiah*, is notorious. And can we think it at all probable, that the nation of the Jews would so entirely have forgotten the great and sole use of sacrifices, when the custom had been



continued, with small interruption, from the time of their first institution, in a land where every thing, and especially religion, was under the immediate inspection of divine providence.

As the heathens probably borrowed the practice of sacrificing from the Patriarchs, or Jews; it is reasonable to suppose that they would, along with it, borrow from them the general notion and design of sacrifices. But, whatever disputes have arisen on the subject of the heathen sacrifices, thus much seems to be very clear, that they offered sacrifices to their Gods with the very same view with which they offered them any other gifts of value; and that the more intelligent of them thought to please, or appease their Deities by the disposition of their minds, and not by the pain or the merit of any Being whatever; much less of the beasts they sacrificed.---

When

When they offered human victims, it was only under the notion of something exceedingly dear to them, a proof of their greater affection to their Gods, and to their religion.

It is usual with the sacred writers, both of the Old and New Testament, to assign the reasons of such of the divine proceedings respecting the human race as are more difficult to comprehend; and the necessity and propriety of which are not very obvious, and might be liable to be called in question; such is the divine condescension to the weakness, the short-sightedness, and even the perverseness of men. He is willing that we should be satisfied that all his ways are equal, that they are all just, reasonable, and expedient; even in cases where our concern in them is not very apparent. Much more, then, might we expect an

explanation of the divine measures, when  
 the very end to be answered by them is  
 lost, if we do not enter into the reasons  
 of them ; as is apparently the case with re-  
 spect to the doctrine of atonement : since  
 the proper end of the measures that this  
 opinion represents the deity to have taken,  
 was the display of the divine justice, and  
 of his abhorrence of sin. Now, to whom  
 was this display intended to be made ?  
 Without doubt, to the human race ; prin-  
 cipally, the persons who are most nearly  
 concerned in it, and whose sentiments and  
 conduct, the views it suggested were in-  
 tended to affect. Do the sacred writers  
 ever suppose the human race so very sa-  
 gacious, as to be able to enter, of them-  
 selves, into the reasons of such high pro-  
 ceedings, without any hint for their direc-  
 tion ? Can we think the divine wisdom and  
 goodness would have left us to ourselves to  
 form sentiments and apprehensions of things,  
 of



of the utmost consequence to our virtue and our happiness, by way of mere distant and dubious inference? Is it not very surprising then, that, in all the books of scripture, neither in the Old nor the New Testament, neither the Divine Being himself to the patriarchs, neither Moses, nor the prophets, by his direction, to the Jews, nor Christ or his apostles, to the Christians, ever assert, or explain, the principle on which the doctrine of atonement is founded: for tho' they describe the heinous nature of sin, in the strongest colours, represent it as exceeding sinful, and the like; they never once go a single step further, and assert that it is of so heinous a nature, that God, the infinitely good and gracious, cannot pardon it without an adequate satisfaction being made to his justice, and the honour of his laws and government.—In all their discourses, there occurs not one clause that contains the sentiment, and it admits of

great variety of expression. Nay, the contrary sentiment abounds every where, *viz.* that repentance and a good life, are, of themselves, sufficient to recommend us to the favour of God. So many notorious sinners, both whole nations, and particular persons as are addressed by inspired persons, and their conduct strongly remonstrated against, in the course of the sacred history, the regards of none of them are ever directed to any thing further than their own hearts and lives.—*Return unto me, and I will return unto you*, is the strain of all they say upon the occasion: of which innumerable instances might be produced from the writings of the prophets\*.

THE

\* It is pretended however by the author of *Jesus Christ the Mediator*, p. 85, &c. that the principles on which the doctrine of atonement is founded, are laid down by the apostle Paul, in Rom. iii. 25, 26. which passage is as follows. *Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation thro' faith in his blood, to declare his*  
right-

THE whole strain of our Saviour's discourses and his behaviour to the Jews, one par-

*righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.*

IN descanting upon this passage, the author largely contends, that the death of Christ is here represented as a display of the divine justice; and from hence he infers, that unless Christ had died as a propitiation for our sins, the Divine Being could not, in strict justice, have received even penitent offenders into his favour.

But this construction is entirely founded on the supposition that the word [*δικαιοσύνη*] in the text is properly rendered *justice*, and [*δικαιος*] *just*, with respect to inflicting punishment; both which are very rarely, if, indeed, ever, the true sense of the words in the New Testament. They cannot be rendered into English with more propriety than by the words *righteous*, and *righteousness*, denoting uprightness, integrity, goodness, and virtue in general. To render them



particular of which hath been taken notice  
of already, affords, likewise, many strong  
suspi-

otherwise in this place, is to mistake the sense of it; as  
will appear from the following view of it.

To obviate the cavils of the Jews against the Gen-  
tiles being admitted to partake of all the privileges,  
which they imagined they had an exclusive right to,  
without being obliged to conform to the law of Mo-  
ses, St. Paul denies that any persons are justified, or  
intituled to these blessings, by the *law*; and maintains,  
that the true and original method of justification was  
by *faith*; as he proves from the case of Abraham,  
David, &c. by which method a way is open for the  
justification of the Gentiles: since, according to this  
method, nothing more than *faith* in Christ is neces-  
sarily required of them. Tho' God, therefore, justi-  
fies all that believe in Jesus, he is just [i. e. to the  
Jews] The Jews have no reason to object against this  
proceeding: for *this same righteousness which is without  
the law, is manifestly witnessed by the law and the prophets;  
even the righteousness of God, which is by faith in Jesus  
Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there  
is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the  
glory*

suspensions against the truth of the doctrine of atonement. For instance, is it not very surprising, that our Lord should, upon no occasion whatever, assert and vindicate so very important a doctrine, if it were the

*glory of God ; being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ ; by whom, as from a mercy-seat, he hath more fully and extensively published this method of justification.*

THAT this is the true sense of the passage, will easily appear probable to any one who considers the general strain and drift of St. Paul's discourses, that in almost all the controversies he enters into, he is combating the Jewish prejudices ; and that many of those parts of his writings which have been supposed to consist of reasonings upon general moral principles, appear now to be nothing more than a discussion of some particular questions that were started in those times. This thought is a general key to the controversial part of almost all St. Paul's epistles, and makes good sense of them ; whereas, by supposing that he is not speaking to the prejudices that prevailed in his own times, we make him advance notions, the most shocking and inconsistent in the world.

truth ?

truth ? He very severely reproves the Jews for handling the word of God deceitfully, in most other respects : he never spares the Jewish *Doctors*, but frequently corrects the false glosses they put upon the sense of the scriptures ; and yet, though there appears not the least trace of the Jews retaining any notion of this ancient and fundamental doctrine of religion, our Lord never once undertakes to point out to them so remarkable a deficiency in their practical principles : nor doth he take any opportunity to give, even his own disciples in private, more just views of the thing. As often as he speaks of the necessity of his death, it is never as a sacrifice or propitiation for sin ; but only *that the scriptures should be fulfilled*, which foretold that he should suffer. See Matt. xxvi. 53, &c. Mark xiv. 48. Luke xxiv. 25, 26. and at large, at the 44th ver. *And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, whilst I was yet with you ;*



*you; that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understandings that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, beginning at Jerusalem.* Not a word, observe, is here said of atonement though there offered so fair an occasion of insisting upon it, after the mention of remission of sins,

IN our Lord's discourse to his disciples before his death, recorded by St. *John*, he takes great pains to reconcile them to his departure from them, and to convince them of the expediency of it for themselves; but all the reason he gives for it is, that, otherwise the comforter would not come to them. He drops not a hint of the necessity  
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of his death for the expiation of sin, tho' that would have suggested to them a very satisfactory and intelligible reason of his death. Indeed I do not see that any reason can be assigned why he should not have explained it to them in that light, if it had been the true design of his death.

OUR Lord's discourses are chiefly in a moral strain. He inveighs freely against all the prevailing vices and irregularities of his time, and mentions all the more aggravating circumstances of them; but he never hints at the necessity of any satisfaction being made to the justice of God for them. He makes a fine encomium upon several moral virtues, and pronounces, absolutely, such and such characters to be fit for the kingdom of God; but never with any such cautions and restrictions as are generally given at this day, letting us understand that these virtuous qualifications alone would  
not

not intitle a man to a place there. In any thing that our Lord has said to undeceive us, we are naturally, and unavoidably, led to understand, by his discourses, that good moral habits and good works, the love of God, and the love of our fellow-creatures will, of themselves, effectually recommend a man to the favour of God, and intitle him to a place in heaven.

In the representation that our Lord makes of the transactions of the day of judgment, in the 25th chapter of Matthew, there is no mention of any thing but of good or bad works. The righteous, agreeable to their character, think humbly of themselves, and will hardly believe that they have done any thing very meritorious: they are surprized and overcome with joy, at the approbation of their virtue and merit; but never refer themselves to the sufferings or to the merit of their advocate and judge, for  
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the ground of their hopes; though nothing in the world can be conceived to have been more natural and pertinent upon the occasion.

FURTHER, if our Lord had not chosen, for reasons that we cannot comprehend, to deliver himself in plain terms concerning the great doctrine of atonement, he might have done it as obscurely as he had pleased by way of parable; as he did in many other cases; and yet, in these parables of our Lord in which he gives a representation of his death and sufferings, we find no such view of it. In that remarkable parable concerning the householder and the husbandman, Matt. xxi. 33. in which we read, that after the owner had sent his servants to receive the fruits of his vineyard, and, they were ill treated, he last of all sent his son. It is evident that the son came with the same view that the servants had

had come before him; and the husbandmen's killing of him, was an action of the same nature with, though more heinous than, their beating and killing the servants.

*John the Baptist*, our Lord's fore-runner, must be given up as a mere legal preacher. The perpetual burden of all his discourses is *repentance*, and *works meet for repentance*: these he preaches to all his auditors, without caution or reserve. When he exhorts and warns his hearers to *flee from the wrath to come*, Luke iii. 7. and they ask him, in their turns, what they must do? He enjoins them nothing but dry moral duties. Upon these, he taught all that consulted him to build their hopes of eternal salvation.

WHAT can be more unaccountable than the whole conduct as well as all the discourses  
of

of the *Apostles*, recorded in the book of the Acts, if they knew any thing of the doctrine of atonement? If it be pretended that the times of *John the Baptist* and of our Saviour were not able to bear such a doctrine; though no reason can be given why a thing so very plain and reasonable, as this doctrine is maintained to be, might not have been explained to any person at any time; and why a doctrine, so very fundamental, ought not to have been explained at the very first; must it not appear strange that the Apostles, after they had received the Holy Ghost, by whom they were led into all truth, should be altogether as silent about this doctrine, in all their addresses both to the Jews, and the Heathen world? They declaim, with the utmost freedom and severity, against their gross corruptions and abominable vices, but never mention the necessity of any propitiation. They only *now call upon all men every where to repent, and believe*



*believe the gospel, for the remission of sins. This is the invariable strain of their preaching.*

ST. Peter; in his discourse to the Jews, immediately after the descent of the Spirit, and again in the temple upon the cure of the impotent man, paints, in the blackest colours, the sin of the Jews in crucifying our Lord; but though he exhorts to repentance, says not a word of satisfaction, expiation, or atonement, to allay any apprehensions they might have of the divine justice: and a fairer opportunity he could not have wished to introduce it, nor with the advantage of fine strokes of oratory; such as must immediately have occurred to any man in his situation; and such as are frequent, and much admired, in the discourses of our modern divines. How fine a turn might have been given to the popular cry of the same nation, *His blood*

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be

*be on us and on our children?* Instead of this, he only exhorts them to repent, and believe that Christ was the Messiah, for the remission of sins. What he says concerning the death of Christ, is as follows.

ACTS ii. 23. *Him being delivered, by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and, with wicked hands, have crucified and slain. — iii. 17, 18. And now, brethren, I wot, that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers; but those things that God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.*

ST. Stephen, in his long apology, at his trial, speaks much and frequently concerning the death of Christ; but says not a word about its being a propitiation for sin, to teach his hearers to consider it in that light.

WHAT

WHAT could have been a fairer opportunity of introducing the doctrine of satisfaction for sin, by the death of Christ, than the evangelist *Philip* had, when he was explaining to the eunuch the only prophecy in the Old Testament that seems to represent it in that light : yet in the whole story, which is not a very concise one, there is no mention of it. And when the *eunuch* declares his faith, which gave him a right to christian baptism, it is simply this, *that Jesus Christ was the son of God.*

ST. *Peter*, preaching to *Cornelius*, the first of the proper Gentile converts, is still silent about this fundamental and most important article of the christian faith. Much he says of Jesus Christ : “ How that God  
 “ anointed him with the Holy Ghost, and  
 “ with power ; how he went about doing  
 “ good, and healing all that were oppressed  
 “ of the devil ; ”—of his death likewise,



and resurrection, of which they, the Apostles, were witnesses. But nothing at all of our good works, repentance and faith, being accepted through his sufferings or merit. On the contrary, what he says upon the occasion, may, without any forced construction, be turned against this favourite opinion. *Of a truth, says he, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but, in every nation, he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted of him, Acts x. 34, &c.* Did not *Cornelius* need to be informed, of this great truth! or was it not of the first consequence?

ST. *Paul*, before the Jews at *Antioch*, Acts xiii. 28. at *Thessalonica*, chap. xvii. before *Agrippa*, chap. xxvi. and at *Rome*, chap. xxviii. upon all these occasions, he treats, and sometimes pretty largely, concerning the death of Christ; but never with any other view than as an event that was foretold by the prophets.

prophets. He shews them the aggravations of their sins, and exhorts them to repentance and faith in Christ as the promised Messiah; but nothing further. Preaching to the Heathens, at *Lysira*, Acts xiv. and at *Athens*, chap. xvii. he discourses concerning the supremacy and goodness of the one living and true God: he exhorts them to turn from their lying vanities; seeing that, though at the times of their former ignorance God had winked, he now commands all men every where to repent; because, he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. Here is sound reasoning, and evidence; but not a word of the true gospel scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, according to some. Here is nothing evangelical: all is moral, legal, and carnal: far different from the strain in which one

of our modern divines, with his head full of the truth, the grandeur, and importance of the doctrine of atonement by the blood of Christ, would have addressed the Jewish and Gentile world upon the occasion: and, indeed, considering how far either the Jews or Heathens, at that day, were from having any apprehension of such a doctrine; it was highly necessary that the Apostle should have begun with this foundation of all religion, of all acceptable worship, and have explained it thoroughly.

WHEN we find the Apostles so absolutely silent, where, we cannot but think, there was the greatest occasion to open themselves freely concerning the doctrine of atonement; when, in their most serious discourses, they express themselves in language that really sets it aside; when they never once directly assert the necessity of any satisfaction for sin, or the insufficiency of our  
good



good works alone to entitle us to the favour of God and future happiness; must we build so important an article of our faith upon mere hints and inferences from their writings, and those expressed so much in the air of *figure*, *allusion*, and *accommodation*, which is all that is found in them in favour of such an opinion? And when, besides, we see that those figures and allusions are, themselves, very obscure, and inconsistent with each other? Can we think they seriously believed any thing about the matter? or ever meant to appear to believe that Christ died to satisfy the justice of God for sin, or that his merit or worth avails with God for our pardon.

It is pretended, that the apprehension of some further satisfaction being made to Divine Justice than repentance and reformation is necessary to allay the fears of sincere penitents. They would else, it is said, be

subject to perpetual alarms, lest all they could do should be ineffectual to restore them to the divine favour and acceptance: and some things plausible enough in theory are said by *divines* in support of it. But till, at least, one clear instance be produced of some person being actually distressed with these supposed fears and doubts; till some one, at least, can be proved to have expressed his doubt and uncertainty of the divine favour in case of sincere repentance, I can treat this case as no other than an imaginary one. The demand cannot be thought unreasonable. There is the range of the whole world, of Jews and Heathens, before Christ, and, if that be too narrow, of three or four centuries in christianity, to search for such a person: so that however clear an idea we may think we are able to form in our minds, of a person entertaining doubts of the divine placability, I cannot yet seriously believe that he ever really existed.

I look upon him as a mere child of fancy, impregnated with superstition and prejudice, and that this great *Goliath* in the controversy, let him look ever so big and threatening, will prove to be one of the fabulous race, that will vanish of himself before the light of truth; *just as the baseless fabric of a vision, and leave no wreck behind.*

AND as no proof can be produced of the existence of such a person, so we have no reason to fear that any of the human race, if left to their own natural unperverted apprehensions of things, will ever fall into such doubts and uncertainties, as *all mankind* are sometimes represented to be so deplorably and helplessly involved in. For, directly contrary to what hath been so confidently advanced on this head, it appears from the history of the opinions of mankind, that all men naturally apprehend the Deity to be propitious. *That God is a merciful*



*merciful being*, seems to have been the darling notion of all mankind in all ages. Indeed, how can we conceive it should have been otherwise, when we consider that men's first, most natural, and simple idea of God, is, that of a perfect being; in whom goodness, or benevolence, is that which is universally esteemed to add a glory and grace to every other perfection. And *mercy* is, perhaps, the very simplest idea of goodness in the apprehensions of men in general: whereas implacability, or unrelenting rigour, always appears under the notion of something horrid, monstrous, and diabolical\*.

BUT,

\* It is remarkable that Dr. S. Clarke, in his admirable discourse on the evidences of the christian revelation, when he comes to this point, and, like others before him, represents mankind as absolutely at a loss upon what terms God would receive offenders into his favour, produces not so much as a single fact or quotation in support of what he so roundly asserts; though he is known to be peculiarly happy in his choice

BUT, leaving these arguments *a priori*, let us come to more stubborn *facts*; of which I shall select a few from sacred, and choice of the most pertinent ones, upon all other occasions. He gives us, indeed, a general reference to *Plato's Alcibiades the 2d*: But I do not find, in all the conversation, that passes betwixt *Socrates* and *Alcibiades*, that either of them drops the least hint of their uncertainty about the divine favour in case of sincerity, or the least doubt that human virtue is not of itself a sufficient recommendation to his acceptance. Nay, the contrary is, in this very conversation, almost expressed by *Socrates* [ἐνδυνάμει γὰρ καὶ παρὰ θεοῖς, καὶ παρ' ἀνθρώποις, τοῖς μὲν ἔχουσιν, δίκαιοσιν τε καὶ φρονεῖσι διαφερόμενος τετιμωμένος].

ALL that these two persons appear to be at a loss about, is, some one to teach them what to pray for; lest, through their ignorance, they should ask of the Gods things hurtful to themselves; and not any person to intercede with God for them, or one whose sufferings or merit might avail with God for their acceptance. How then is this reference to the purpose? How doth it prove, that any man ever entertained a doubt of the divine placability?

a few from prophane history. The religion of *Job* seems to have been, what we call, the *Patriarchal*; i. e. but one remove from natural religion: indeed the very same, with this only advantage, that the Deity in those times interposed upon several occasions, to direct and assist his worshippers, but never to settle any religious establishment. All the ceremonies then in use were sacrifices: whether they so much as observed the *sabbath*, is a point, by no means well ascertained. However neither *Job* himself, nor any of his friends, seem to have had any notion, or to have been sensible of any want, of a scheme of atonement for sin. *Job*, indeed, complains, chap. ix. 33. *Neither is there any days-man betwixt us, that he might lay his hand upon us both.* But it is evident that *Job* did not want this day's-man to intercede with God for him; since he was not then conscious of any crime: nay, he is, at that very time, lamenting his



his want of an opportunity of justifying himself to the face of the Almighty. He wants a days-man, therefore, only to give him an opportunity of pleading his cause, according to the custom of the courts of judicature in those times. Yet, in all the account of his sufferings and complaints; of their expostulations with him, upon the supposition of his being a hypocrite; of *Elibu's*, and afterwards of the Almighty's interposing to decide the controversy betwixt him and his friends, there is no mention made of satisfaction or atonement for sin; tho' we can hardly imagine any thing so circumstanced as to make the introducing of it more natural and pertinent: if not here, where should we expect it?

THAT *Job's* friends were the farthest in the world from seeming to suspect, that any thing more than repentance and reformation, were necessary to the pardon of sin;  
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the following specimen of their expostulations with him will satisfy us.

JOB xi. 14, &c. [Zophar] *If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away; and let no wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot, yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear: because thou shalt forget thy misery, and remember it as waters that pass away: and thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning. And thou shalt be secure because there is hope, &c. Job xxii. 21. [Eliphaz.] Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thy heart. If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up; thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence: for then shalt thou have delight in the Almighty, and shall lift up*

*up thy face unto God. Then shalt thou make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows. Job xxxiv. 31.*

*[Elihu] Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more. That which I know not, teach thou me; if I have done iniquity, I will do no more. Job xxxvi. 8.*

*If they be bound in fetters, and be holden in cords of affliction; then he shews them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded. He opens also their ear to discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity. If they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasures. But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge. verse 16.*

*Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait into a broad place, where there is no straitness; and that which is set on thy table should be full of fatness.*

AND



AND doth not the Almighty himself give a sanction to the sentiments of these discourses, when, upon Job's simply professing his repentance, as in chap. xlii. 5. *I have heard of thee with the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee: therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* We read that *the Lord turned again the captivity of Job, and blessed his latter end more than his beginning,* verses 10, 12.

WHAT can be more evident from the whole history of *Job*, than that mankind, in his time, had not the least apprehension that repentance and reformation alone, without the sufferings or merit of any Being whatever, would not sufficiently atone for past offences.

THE history of the repentance of the *Ninevites* at the preaching of *Jonah* is so remarkable, and so much to the present purpose

purpose, that I shall give it almost intire  
in the very words of scripture.

JONAH iii. 4, &c. *And Jonab entered in-  
to the city a day's journey and cryed, and  
said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be  
destroyed. So the people of Nineveh believed  
God, and proclaim'd a fast, and put on sack-  
cloth, from the greatest of them even to the  
least of them. For word came unto the king  
of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and  
laid aside his robes from him, and covered him  
with sack-cloth, and sat in ashes; and he  
caused it to be proclaimed and published  
throughout all Nineveh, by the decree of the  
king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man  
nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing, let  
them not feed, or drink water; but let man  
and beast be covered with sack-cloth, and cry  
mightily unto God; Yea, let them turn every  
one from his evil way, and from the violence  
that is in their hands. Who can tell if God*

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will

*will turn, and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil ways, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.*

THIS is the naked fact. The following are the reflections which seem to be naturally suggested by it. The Ninevites must be allowed (and if not, the history sufficiently proves it) to have had no knowledge of the necessity of any satisfaction for sin besides repentance and reformation ; and yet, tho' the sentence pronounced by the prophet was as absolute, and unconditional, as it could be expressed, we see they, still, were not without hopes of finding mercy, in case of a general and hearty repentance: so great was their confidence in the placability of the Divine Being, according to *Jonah's* own expression, upon the occasion, iv. 2. *I knew that*



*that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.* And that the prophet himself would not soften any thing of the rigour of the sentence, or give them any encouragement to hope for favour, the temper which he discovered upon the happy, but, to him, unwished for catastrophe, abundantly convinces us. Farther, can it be thought, that, if any satisfaction besides repentance were necessary to the forgiveness of sin, God would have concealed it from the *Ninevites*, and even acted in such a manner as must effectually suppress any tendency in their minds to the most distant apprehensions of that nature. It appears from hence, that men's persuasion of the heinous nature and destructive consequences of sin, might be sufficient to make them abandon it, without the help of those additional considerations which the doctrine

of atonement would have suggested for that purpose.

THE religion of ancient *Perfians* and modern *Persees*, may as properly be denominated natural, as any under the sun: and there is extant a very satisfactory proof of their dependence upon the divine placability, without the least reference to the sufferings, or the merit of any Being whatever, to make satisfaction to the justice of God for their offences, in a form of prayer which their priests pronounce at the bed of a dying person, collected by Dr. *Hyde*, and quoted in the *Universal History*, vol. V. p. 166. it is as follows.

“ O Almighty Lord! thou hast com-  
 “ manded that we should not offend thee;  
 “ this man hath offended. Thou hast or-  
 “ dained that we should do good, yet this  
 “ man hath done evil. Thou hast required  
 “ that

“ that we should daily and exactly worship  
 “ thee ; which, however, this man hath  
 “ neglected. Now oh merciful God ! at  
 “ the hour of death, forgive him his of-  
 “ fences, his misdeeds, and his neglects,  
 “ and receive him to thyself.”

SOCRATES, of all the ancients, was farthest from the notion of appeasing the anger of God by external services of any kind ; and yet, if there be any truth in *Plato's Phædo*, he died without the least doubt of a happy immortality.

To these, if the previous reasoning be admitted, may be added the case of all the Jewish nation, both before and at our Saviour's time : for none of them ever expresses the least doubt concerning the favour of God, in case of sincere repentance and amendment. Their sacrifices, they were sensible, could not atone for moral trans-



gressions ; and they appear not to have had the knowledge of any other.

It is urged, in favour of the doctrine of atonement, that the scheme is absolutely necessary in the moral government of God ; because, upon different principles, no satisfaction is made to his offended justice. But I answer, that it becomes us ever to bear in mind that divine justice is not that blind principle, which, upon any provocation, craves satisfaction indiscriminately of all that come within its reach, or that throw themselves in its way ; that justice in the Deity can be no other than a modification of goodness, a benevolence that is his sole governing principle ; the object and end of which, is, the supreme happiness of his creatures and subjects. This happiness, being of a moral nature, must be chiefly promoted by such a constitution of the moral government we are under ;

as

as shall afford the most effectual motives to induce men to regulate their lives well. Every degree of severity, therefore, that is not so circumstanced as not to have this tendency; *viz.* to promote repentance, and the practice of virtue, must be rejected by the benevolent principle of the moral government of God, as disagreeable even to divine justice, if it have the same end as the divine goodness, the happiness of God's creatures. Now that any severity is necessary to be exercised on such offenders as are truly penitent, even in human government, is owing to the imperfection of government, when administered by men; for were the magistrates judges of the hearts of men, there would result no manner of inconvenience from pardoning all offenders who were become truly penitent and reformed: for, hereby, the offenders themselves would become useful members of the society, and the penetration

of the administrators of justice would effectually prevent any, who, notwithstanding their pretences to repentance, harboured evil designs in their hearts, from taking advantage of such acts of lenity.

THIS is exactly the case under the moral government of the all-seeing God. Here, therefore, measures formed upon the justest principles of equity, may be taken, without hazarding the ends of government; measures which would be very absurd and pernicious in any human administration. In the all-perfect government and administration of God, therefore, there is no occasion to exercise any severity on penitent offenders themselves: how absurd then would it be to exercise it on others! Thus the principles of just government are so far from illustrating and vindicating the necessity of any satisfaction for sin, besides the repentance and the reformation of the offender,



fender, that, when brought to this test, its absurdity grows the more glaring, and our minds become more strongly disposed to reject it; as that notion appears to be utterly inconsistent with the true principle of the moral government of God: and if so the doctrine of atonement must, when viewed in its true light, raise in mens minds such unworthy notions of the divine perfections, as will, if not corrected and overruled by something else, have an unfriendly aspect upon their virtue.

BUT notwithstanding this, the influence which the doctrine of atonement is maintained to have upon *practice*, has been strongly urged in its favour; therefore I shall examine the nature of its influence, more particularly, upon the mind. Now all the advantages of this opinion are acknowledged, by its advocates, to be derived from this, *viz.* that it raises mens apprehensions

hensions of the divine justice, and of the evil and demerit of sin; sentiments of powerful effect in promoting repentance and reformation. Admitting this, it is obvious to remark, that, in proportion as any opinion raises our idea of the justice or severity of God, it must sink our ideas of the divine mercy: and since a sense of the mercy and compassion of God, is, to say the least, as powerful an inducement to repentance, and as efficacious a motive to a holy life, (especially with ingenuous minds) as the apprehension of his justice; what the doctrine of atonement gains on the one hand, it loses on the other; and so all this boasted advantage intirely vanishes.

BUT, further, even this advantage may justly be denied the doctrine of atonement; for though, in order to the forgiveness of sin, some further severity or resentment be  
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supposed necessary to be shewn, on God's part; yet, according to the doctrine of atonement, this severity is so circumstanced as intirely to lose its effect. For if the severity be intended to work upon men, the men themselves should feel the severity. The same thing it will be to the bulk of mankind (who are the persons to be wrought upon) whether the Divine Being animadvert upon the vices that are repented of or no, if the offenders themselves know that they shall never feel the effects of such animadversion. It is acknowledged, that, in a wise human administration (to which in present argument, I admit the divine to correspond,) the end of government, which is the happiness of the community, is not answered by the penitence of the offenders. The laws which annex certain punishments to crimes, must have their course, and example must be made for a warning to others: but then, the sufferers and the ex-  
amples



amples are always the offenders themselves : and that the same end would be answered by another person's voluntary suffering instead of the offender may be asserted, but is not at all supported by reason and probability. For, since it must be disinterested generosity in the offender that spares the life of his substitute, it is not easy to think, that, if every person who is disposed to transgress were sure of finding one to suffer for him, the numbers of such pests of society would grow the less by the expedient. And if the suffering had been already endured by some person of eminence for all future transgressors, it is impossible to conceive how it should be any restraint at all ; since nothing that any man could then do, would expose any one to further suffering.

HAVING enlarged upon each part of the evidence separately, I shall now give the  
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sum of the whole, in one view. That the pardon of sin is not dispensed in consideration, either of the sufferings or the merit of Christ, we first suspect from finding many real inconsistencies in those texts of scripture which give such a view of it, and the manifest air of figure and allusion they carry with them. The general tenor of scripture by no means favours it: for the scriptures every where represent men to be intitled to the favour of God solely on account of their personal moral qualifications. The doctrine of *satisfaction for sin* clashes with those absolute and unlimited declarations of God's free-mercy to sincere penitents, which the scriptures every where abound with, and which *David*, and other penitents, always plead, without their giving the least hint of their depending upon any thing but their sincerity to recommend them. The following considerations tend to  
render

render it still more suspected. When the legal sacrifices, under the Old Testament, are declared to be insufficient to recommend us to the divine favour, we are never, thereupon, referred to any more perfect sacrifice, any more availing atonement, or satisfaction; but always, and only, to good works; as what were alone sufficiently meritorious in the sight of God. Neither the ancient nor modern Jews, neither the heathen world, appear to have had the least knowledge, or betray the least sense of their want of any expedient of satisfaction for sin, besides repentance and a good life. And such are, and ever have been, mens natural apprehensions of the divine mercy, as that not one person, of any age or nation of the world, appears ever to have entertained the least doubt or suspicion of it. The principles on which the doctrine of atonement are founded, are no where  
laid



laid down in the scriptures; the necessity or expediency of any satisfaction for sin being no-where asserted, or explained, in the sacred books.—And although, the doctrine of atonement is maintained to be, a most easy, practical, and fundamental principle of religion, it is never insisted upon, at all, much less in any such view, either by our Lord, or any of his Apostles.—On the contrary, though in the course of the history of the Gospels, and of the Acts, there occurred many fair opportunities of introducing and explaining it, they are entirely silent in this matter.—That any satisfaction should be made to the divine justice, besides repentance and reformation, is utterly inconsistent with the true principles of the just, equitable, and all-perfect moral government, and administration of God. *Lastly*, Though we are taught, indeed, and commanded to enforce all our petitions, and those for the pardon

pardon of sin, among the rest, with the name of Christ \* ; this is only what is analogous to every other part of our worship ; which admits of our using such arguments and pleas with the Divine Being as we usually do with our fellow-creatures, and which is a mark of the imperfection of our state, and of the worship that is suited thereunto.

I AM very sensible that, after so daring an attempt to shake the credit of a doctrine, which many persons look upon to be the most essential to christianity, as the most fundamental principle, the life and soul of the whole scheme ; without which all the rest is a mere dead, lifeless thing, destitute of spirit or meaning ; the advocates for the doctrine of atonement will be ready to ask ; What, if we give up

\* The Editor takes the liberty of observing, that *the name of Christ*, imports, the doctrine of truth and grace delivered by Christ.

this

this point, must be our notions of christianity? Wherein shall we differ from *Deists*? Is there then no scheme of redemption at all? Is there no sense in which Christ died to save us from our sins, and from the wrath of God? If Christ did not die to make satisfaction for sin, for what end did he die? and what is our gain by it? Instead of making a direct reply to all these, and such like queries; which may be started without end, I shall subjoin, by way of conclusion, a concise view of the scheme of salvation by Jesus Christ, without the doctrine of atonement for sin.

LET us, then, suppose the whole race of mankind to be in a state of apostacy from God, lost to all sense of religion and virtue, in the expressive language of scripture, *dead in trespasses and sins*; that without a revelation and a saviour, they were in



the most deplorably vicious and wretched circumstances, in a sure way to make themselves miserable both here and hereafter.

IN this state of things, God, the ever benevolent, who is *good to the unthankful and the unworthy*, wishes their happiness ; but, rational and moral agents, as men are, cannot be made happy without being recovered to a sense and practice of their duty ; which must, from its own nature, be a voluntary thing. What, therefore, can the ever blessed God, tender of our happiness, do for us ? To force our compliance, would not answer the purpose : we must be won upon, be engaged, by proper motives and considerations, to reform our hearts and our lives : such measures must be taken with men as are suited to the nature of reasonable beings, and, at the same time, governed very much by

by views of interest, for such creatures are men.

Now all that we conceive could possibly be done for us; all that even infinite wisdom, goodness and power could contrive and execute in order to our recovery, due regard being had to our nature, may be reduced to these following particulars. *First*, To instruct us in the whole extent of our duty. *Secondly*, To engage us to the performance of it, by the promise of suitable and sufficient reward, and to deter us from disobedience by the fear of punishment. *Thirdly*, To draw us by a proper set of examples of virtue; and *lastly*, To give us the most satisfactory assurance of the pardon of our past sins upon our repentance and

F 2      reformation,

reformation, and of the certain acceptance of our sincere, though imperfect, endeavours to do our duty.

AND hath not all this been done for us in the most ample manner, in a course of moral dispensations, commencing in the days of our first progenitor, and carried on with the utmost regularity, through the hands of the *Patriarchs, Moses, and the Prophets*; till it received its highest perfection by the hands of the blessed *Son of God* himself; who, on this truly great and generous errand, submitted to all the infirmities, indignities, and inconveniencies of human condition; and, to close the whole, in the most advantageous manner, died a most painful and ignominious death.

Is



Is not here a scheme of salvation and redemption, in every part complete, without any atonement? Simple as it is, are not the few parts of which it consists, what contain every thing that could be applied, with effect, for our benefit? Would not, then, any addition to it greatly clog and embarrass the scheme, and spoil its effect? You say; this leaves us at a loss to know what provision is made for the pardon of our sins: but what doth that concern us? If we have the fullest assurance from the mouth of God himself, that our sins are *actually* forgiven, upon our repentance, (though we did not know for what reason; or whether any other reason than repentance were necessary) should not that satisfy us? Is not

this assurance, all that can possibly be any inducement to us to forsake our evil ways, and return to God and our duty?

You still ask, what necessity for the death of Christ upon this scheme? If he did not die to make satisfaction for our sins, must he not have died for some end that is very low, and unworthy of him? I reply, Is to die a martyr to the truth, to prove his divine mission in the most illustrious manner that we can conceive; to evidence the benevolence of heart, and the greatness of his soul, the vast importance of the work he undertook, and how much his heart was in it; to encourage all who should hereafter embrace his religion, to lay down their  
lives

lives with courage and chearfulness, in the cause of truth and integrity, by giving an example of suffering virtue in his own agony and death; were these ends, I say, low, and unworthy of Christ? And when we say that he died for these purposes, though we add no other, do we say, that he died in vain? When his death so circumstanced looked with so friendly an aspect upon human virtue and happiness? And when by this means, our Lord put the finishing hand to so extensive a scheme, in which was done whatever was practicable, to recover fallen man to immortal virtue and happiness; is he not with great propriety stiled, our *redeemer, saviour, and mediator?*



AND when, in the word of God, we are taught to consider all the evils that infest this present world; the laborious cultivation of the earth; the shortness and infirmities of human life, with death, and all the evils we can name, as the consequence of the introduction of sin into the world; when the Almighty threatens impenitent sinners with unspeakable torments in the world to come; when he hath put in execution a scheme so astonishingly glorious and expensive, to redeem us from all iniquity; having given up his only begotten son to die, in order to effect it; can we have any pretence for saying, that God hath not sufficiently testified his abhorrence of sin? What could he have done more,

more, consistent with his perfections, and with the natures he had given us, to testify that abhorrence?

WITH this great, but simple scheme of religion, the Apostles were intrusted; that they might publish it for the benefit of the world. And, when we consider what vessels they were that it was deposited in, and to what immediate use it was to be applied; we shall not wonder at the tincture it received from them. The Apostles were *Jews*, and they had to do with Jews. The phrases belonging to the Jewish religion were the most familiar to them, and the fittest, in the world, to make the simple doctrines of christianity take with their countrymen.

At

At a profuse expence, therefore, of figures and allusions fetched from the Jewish ritual, to make the new religion the better to tally with the old; liberties too great, for our *European* manners, but not greater than the Jewish nation had been accustomed to; at the expence, therefore, of no sincerity or integrity, they suit their entertainment to the taste of those who were the first to be invited to partake of it.

WHAT is the Epistle to the Hebrews, but an attempt to shew, that there is something in the christian religion that may be conceived to be analogous to what was most admired in the Jewish; and that the advantage always lay on the  
side



side of the christian? One of the most remarkable particulars in which the christian religion is there maintained to tally with the Jewish, is, in the business of sacrifices: and whereas in the Jewish system they were conceived to take away a kind of ceremonial uncleanness; the author of this Epistle, to magnify the christian scheme, by a bold figure, represents the death of Christ as a sacrifice, which takes away moral impurity, and purges the conscience from dead works; which was more than the blood of bulls and of goats could do.

In the same taste with the Epistle to the Hebrews, is St. *Barnabas's* general

neral Epistle written, several other of the works of the primitive fathers, and considerable parts of many of those that are agreed to be St. *Paul's*; and the same reason will account for the seeming extravagant use of figures and allusions in all of them.

HOWEVER, the disguise in which this simple religion appears, as delivered to us through the hands of the Apostles and primitive fathers, is not so close, but that, with proper attention, we are able to look through it, and discern its true lineaments; and should have done it with much less difficulty, had not this Jewish disguise been made much more unnatural, and unbecoming than  
it

it was at the first by the indefatigable, well meant labours of many christian divines, for some centuries past; who have disguised the disguise itself. By this means our labour is now doubled: we have, in the first place, to get a just idea of the dress which the Jews put upon our religion; which is no very easy task; and, after that, to discover the true form and substance of what they have dressed up in this manner. For, when it was high time to lay aside the figurative expressions of the Apostles, which suited only their own times, we have not only adopted them all, but have put very forced and unnatural constructions upon the figures themselves.

**BUT,**



BUT, having now, in part, happily, rescued our pure religion from the hands both of the Jews and christians; having stripped it of some part of the disguise they have forced upon it; let us preserve it pure and undefiled; nor let us rest satisfied till we have freed it from every ill-judged ornament, that yet remains upon it, and left it as naked as truth.

AND, above all things, let us be careful; that, as we conceive more worthily of God, of Christ, and of his religion; as we clear its principles from whatever is foreign to it, and debases it, from whatever might diminish, or retard its effect; let us make it appear that we really hold it in its purity and simplicity,

by

by letting it have its full and intended effect upon our hearts and lives. May this gospel of God, which brings salvation to all men, teach us to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present evil world. So shall we indeed deserve well of christianity; for what can we do of greater service to the cause, than, at the same time that we vindicate the purity and beautiful simplicity of its principles, we recommend it thus pure and uncorrupted to the world, by a suitable life and conversation?

## THE END.

### ERRATA.

- Introduction p. 13. l. 5. for der. r. ders.  
 16. l. 11. for least, r. last.  
 51. l. 13. for he, r. the.  
 52. l. 13. after truth, put ?  
 66. penult. after good, put ;  
 75. l. 10. for vert, r. verts.

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